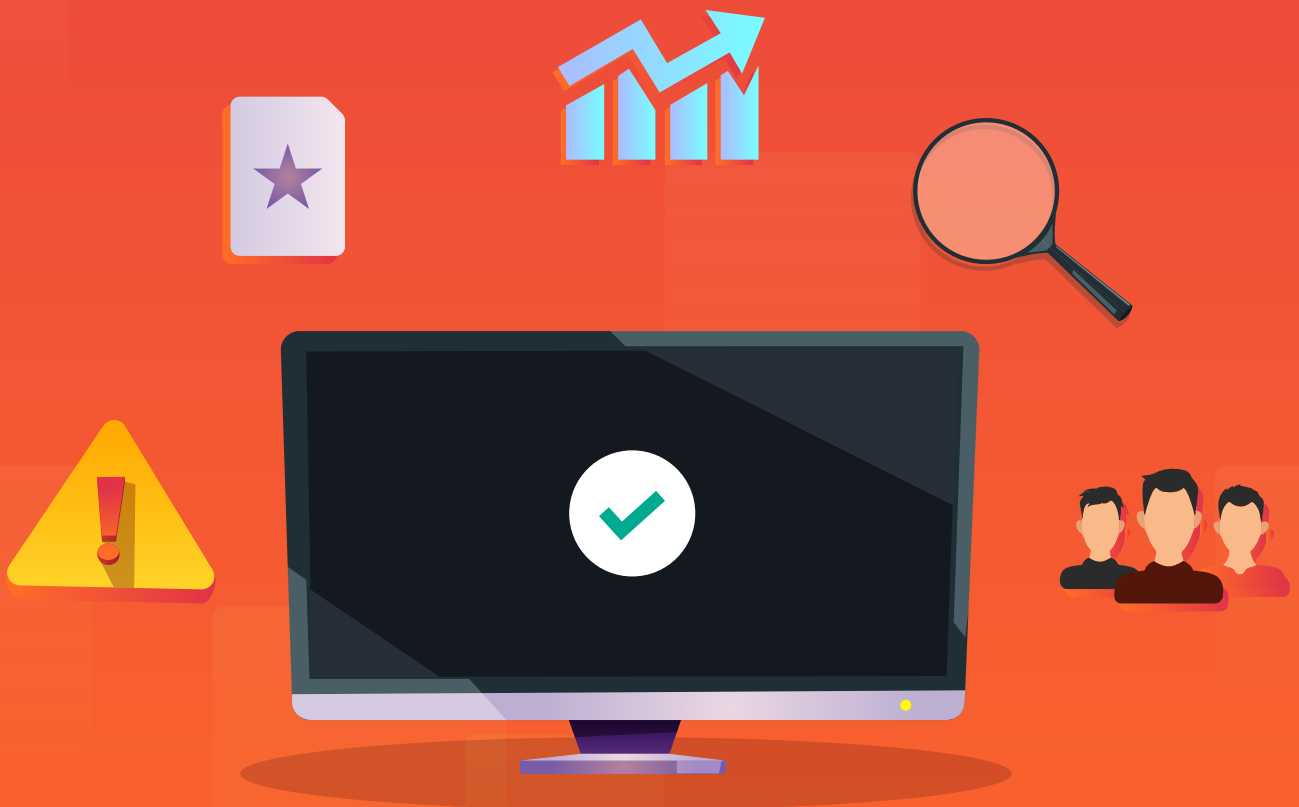


M365 Manager Plus does what Microsoft 365 admin center and PowerShell can't



Introduction

Microsoft 365 is a strategic platform that enables organizations to enhance collaboration, optimize workflows, and drive operational efficiency. Its integrated suite of productivity tools is essential for modernizing business processes and supporting a flexible, cloud-first workforce. By leveraging Microsoft 365, organizations can unlock new opportunities for innovation, streamline their operations, and ensure long-term scalability as they adapt to evolving business needs. If you're planning to move to or are already using Microsoft 365, it's important to be prepared for the challenges that will inevitably arise with an Microsoft 365 setup.

When it comes to native tools, you can manage Microsoft 365 services through the admin center in the Microsoft 365 portal or with PowerShell. Although a combination of the admin center and PowerShell might be enough to meet your Microsoft 365 management needs, both tools come with drawbacks of their own.

In this e-book, we'll discuss how M365 Manager Plus addresses the drawbacks of both the Microsoft 365 admin center and PowerShell when it comes to effective Microsoft 365 administration.

The Microsoft 365 admin center

The Microsoft 365 admin center is the principal management interface for Microsoft 365 services. The admin center offers reports on Microsoft 365 services, monitors service health, manages billing and purchases, and provides access to the specific admin centers associated with each Microsoft 365 service. It may sound comprehensive enough to get the job done, but in reality, the Microsoft 365 admin center falls short in a few critical areas:

- ❌ Reports and data provided by the admin center are very limited, and there are no options for creating custom reports for easy data retrieval.
- ❌ The activities of every user and admin are audited, but there is no single-click access to quickly acquire the data you need. Instead, you have to use filters from the common audit log bucket.
- ❌ The number of bulk management tasks you can perform through the admin center is limited, and the not-so-user-friendly UI doesn't make it any easier. It's also important to note that these limitations extend to bulk management of mailboxes and users as well.
- ❌ You won't receive real-time email alerts on service outages; instead, you have to keep an eye on the service health dashboard to learn about outages.
- ❌ Monitoring and audit data is only stored for a limited time period.

PowerShell

PowerShell is a command-line tool with its own scripting language. It can be used to carry out complex actions in Microsoft 365. By using PowerShell cmdlets, you can automate tasks, manage users, configure settings, and monitor Microsoft 365 services on an advanced scale. Whether you're handling routine administrative duties or addressing complex configuration issues, PowerShell allows you to interact with Microsoft 365 objects precisely. With its extensive set of commands, PowerShell offers a deeper level of control and customization compared to traditional graphical interfaces. With PowerShell, you can:

- ☑ Reveal additional information that isn't available in the Microsoft 365 admin center.
- ☑ Configure Microsoft 365 features that can only be modified with scripts. That includes modifying different attributes of multiple users, and adding multiple users to multiple groups at a time.
- ☑ Perform bulk operations.
- ☑ Filter data based on specific parameters without any restrictions.
- ☑ Print or save data easily.

Why PowerShell isn't the ideal choice

It's true that PowerShell has some advantages over the admin center, but it still has some drawbacks. For instance:

- ☑ To use PowerShell, you'll need adequate scripting knowledge.
- ☑ Scripts only get longer the more complex the task is.
- ☑ There's no option for automation in PowerShell. You have to provide a script every time you want to perform an action.

M365 Manager Plus is an extensive Microsoft 365 tool used for reporting, managing, monitoring, auditing, and creating alerts for critical incidents. With its user-friendly interface, you can easily manage Exchange Online, Microsoft Entra ID, SharePoint Online, OneDrive for Business, Microsoft Teams, and other Microsoft 365 services from a single console.

Key features of M365 Manager Plus

- ✔ Gain a thorough understanding of your environment in Microsoft Entra ID, Exchange Online, SharePoint Online, OneDrive for Business, and other Microsoft 365 services, with detailed reports and intuitive visualizations, all from a single console.
- ✔ Easily manage users, groups, contacts, mailboxes, teams, and sites in bulk without PowerShell scripting.
- ✔ Keep tabs on even the most granular user activities in your Microsoft 365 environment.
- ✔ Configure alert profiles in M365 Manager Plus to notify you of specific activities that take place outside of business hours or occur at unusual frequencies.
- ✔ Delegate granular permissions to technicians without elevating their Microsoft 365 privileges, and create custom roles with any combination of reporting, management, and auditing tasks.
- ✔ Monitor the health and performance of Microsoft 365 features and endpoints around the clock.

In the following sections we'll discuss how M365 Manager Plus provides better control over Microsoft 365 services than the admin center and PowerShell.

Microsoft 365 reporting

| <input type="checkbox"/> Display name ↓ | Username | Licenses |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> tsests1 | : tsests1@ompqa.onmicrosoft.com | Microsoft Fabric (Free) , Microsoft Power Automate Free |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tserusertr | : teste.user1@ompqa.onmicrosoft.com | Microsoft Fabric (Free) , Microsoft Stream Trial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tezusr1 | : tezusr1@ompqa.onmicrosoft.com | Microsoft Stream Trial , Microsoft Fabric (Free) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tezt3 | : tezt3@ompqa.onmicrosoft.com | Microsoft Fabric (Free) , Microsoft Power Automate Free |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tezt1 | : tezt1@ompqa.mail.onmicrosoft.com | Microsoft Stream Trial , Microsoft Power Automate Free Microsoft Fabric (Free) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tetz14 | : tetz5@ompqa.mail.onmicrosoft.com | Unlicensed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tesz2 | : tesz2@ompqa.onmicrosoft.com | Unlicensed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tesuser1 | : tesuser1@ompqa.mail.onmicrosoft.com | Microsoft Stream Trial , Microsoft Fabric (Free) |

Reports on Microsoft 365 help you keep track of what's going on inside your Microsoft 365 setup. While the admin center hosts a small variety of reports on Microsoft 365 services, the data provided by those reports is highly limited. As you can see in the image below, the report on all users provides some information, but at times, you may need more information like contact number, work location, and license details. To view these details, you have to navigate elsewhere, as there is no way to view this information in the report itself.

In this instance, you can use PowerShell to retrieve additional information. The script below retrieves the name and title of all Microsoft 365 users in your organization.

```
PS C:\> Connect-MsolService
>> Get-MsolUser -All | Select DisplayName,UserPrincipalName,Title
```

But one major drawback of PowerShell is that you can only retrieve data for the selected parameters. For example, you can't retrieve the contact information of users in Office A with designation Developer because PowerShell doesn't allow data filtering based on the parameter Office. On the other hand, in M365 Manager Plus, you have an exhaustive list of preconfigured reports that you can view in a single click. You can also pick out the data you want to view using built-in filters, and save the filter settings for future use. This way you won't have to apply the same filter setting every time you need to view similar data.

| | | | | | |
|-----|------------|--------------|-----------|---|---|
| | Office | Contains | A | + | x |
| AND | Title | Contains | Developer | + | x |
| OR | Department | Not Contains | Sales | + | x |

Filter Clear & Close Save as new report

As you can see in the image above, you can easily apply any number of conditions in M365 Manager Plus.

Microsoft 365 auditing

Most organizations audit Microsoft 365 for better security and to ensure compliance requirements for regulatory mandates are met. Storing audit logs helps with forensic analysis; you can analyze past incidents to avoid similar threats in the future. But with the admin center and PowerShell scripts, it's not possible to retrieve audit logs older than 180 days. This, however, isn't ideal, as you need audit data at your disposal, and you need it to be easily accessible.

With the admin center and PowerShell scripts, you have to fetch audit logs from the log repository every single time you need some piece of information. This task quickly becomes time-consuming, especially if your audit log repository holds a significant number of records. The image below shows the Microsoft 365 admin center's UI for fetching required audit data.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Defender Audit search interface. The search query is for the period from Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 00:00:00 GMT to Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 00:00:00 GMT. The total result count is 0 items. The table below displays a list of audit events with columns for Date (UTC), IP Address, User, Record Type, Activity, Item, Admin Units, and Details.

| Date (UTC) | IP Address | User | Record Type | Activity | Item | Admin Units | Details |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------|
| Nov 19, 2024 7:30 PM | 20.190.174.41 | app@sharepoint | SharePoint | Performed search query | | | Search Query Performed from undefined |
| Nov 19, 2024 7:03 PM | 165.173.187.100 | M365PlusDemoServiceAcco... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 7:00 PM | 139.167.79.65 | manageengine_service-1180... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 6:25 PM | 152.58.224.236 | manageengine_service-10656... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 5:20 PM | | NOT-FOUND | DataInsightsRestApiAudit | Search | | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:54 PM | 52.114.14.66 | manuthirajal@mmpqa.onmi... | SharePointListOperation | Updated list | https://omppqa.sharepoint.co... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:54 PM | | app@sharepoint | SharePointSharingOperation | Added user or group to Shar... | https://omppqa.sharepoint.co... | | Added "testddd Owners" ("SecurityGroup") |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:54 PM | 20.190.175.24 | app@sharepoint | SharePoint | Created site collection | https://omppqa.sharepoint.co... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:54 PM | | app@sharepoint | SharePoint | Modified site collection quota | https://omppqa.sharepoint.co... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:32 PM | 182.74.243.42 | Sync_M365-W19-EX_b482ae... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0000-c000-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:24 PM | 122.165.122.33 | manageengine_service-5188... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:21 PM | 165.173.187.100 | M365PlusDemoServiceAcco... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 4:17 PM | 139.167.79.64 | manageengine_service-6104... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 3:40 PM | 139.167.79.66 | manageengine_service-6104... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 3:38 PM | 121.244.91.51 | manageengine_service-3111... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |
| Nov 19, 2024 3:37 PM | 139.167.79.64 | manageengine_service-6104... | AzureActiveDirectoryStsLogon | User logged in | 00000002-0000-0ff1-ce00-0... | | |

With M365 Manager Plus, you can create profiles to view the required audit data in a single click. All you have to do is create audit profiles with the data you want to view, and then sit back and let the product do its work. And the cherry on top—you can access historical audit data dating back to the moment you started using M365 Manager Plus. Some other key advantages include:

- 🕒 **Real-time auditing:** Instead of gathering the associated data for audit reports each time, M365 Manager Plus keeps audit reports updated in real time.
- 🔍 **Profile-based auditing:** Instead of having to peruse the entire list of audit reports to find the right one (as required in Microsoft 365), M365 Manager Plus lets you create your own profiles so you can view only those audit details you need to see.
- 👥 **Group-based auditing:** While auditing Microsoft Entra ID, M365 Manager Plus lets you generate reports for user activity based on group membership. Native Microsoft 365 is unable to audit based on group membership.
- 🔍 **Advanced filtering:** In native Microsoft 365, you can only filter audit logs based on certain attribute values. With M365 Manager Plus, you can filter your audit logs based on any attribute and perform multi-valued searches as needed.
- 👁️ **Custom views:** While Microsoft 365 doesn't support custom views, with M365 Manager Plus you can create your own custom views to see filtered data, summarized data, or summarized data that is filtered. [\[Learn more\]](#)
- 📄 **Export data:** In native Microsoft 365, you can only export data in CSV format. But in M365 Manager Plus, you can export audit data in multiple formats, including PDF, XLS, HTML, or CSV.

The image below shows the Activities by Mailbox Owners audit report. In the left pane, you can view some of the default audit reports provided by M365 Manager Plus.

The screenshot shows the M365 Manager Plus interface. The left sidebar is highlighted with a red box, showing the 'Exchange Online' menu with 'Exchange Activity' expanded. The main area displays a bar chart for 'MailboxLogin' operations and a table of activity logs.

| When | Who | Mailbox UserPrincipalName | Operation | Result Status | Target Details | Modified Properties |
|----------------------|-----|---------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 21 Oct 2024 08:01 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 24 Oct 2024 10:31 AM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 22 Oct 2024 05:18 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 04 Nov 2024 11:12 AM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 28 Oct 2024 03:20 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 04 Nov 2024 11:42 AM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 04 Nov 2024 11:42 AM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 21 Oct 2024 02:08 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 22 Oct 2024 02:29 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 22 Oct 2024 02:28 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |
| 25 Oct 2024 01:24 PM | | | MailboxLogin | Succeeded | - | - |

Microsoft 365 monitoring

You should always keep a close eye on Microsoft 365 activity to identify any discrepancies in your working setup; this is especially true for identifying service outages. When it comes to service health monitoring, neither the Microsoft 365 admin center nor PowerShell provide any real-time alerts. If you're using native tools, you have to keep an eye on the Service Health Dashboard (SHD) around the clock to learn about service incidents and advisories.

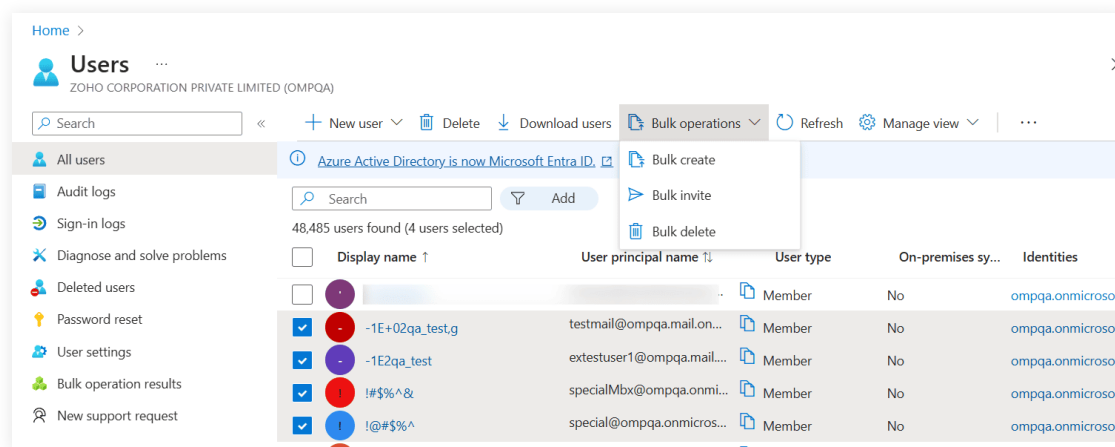
On the other hand, **M365 Manager Plus** offers:

- ☑ **A centralized console for monitoring:** With M365 Manager Plus, you won't have to switch between monitoring applications. You can monitor the health of Exchange Online, Microsoft Entra ID, SharePoint Online, OneDrive for Business, and ten other Microsoft 365 services all from one central location.
- ☑ **Feature and endpoint monitoring:** Monitor the health and performance of features and endpoints of all Microsoft 365 services 24x7.
- ☑ **Real-time alerts:** Receive instant email notifications on service incidents, and cut out those constant visits to the SHD for updates.
- ☑ **Historical data:** Gain access to historical Microsoft 365 service health monitoring data that's older than 30 days.
- ☑ **In-depth graphs:** View graphs illustrating the health status of Microsoft 365 services to facilitate quick decision-making

Microsoft 365 management

In larger organizations, a significant number of employees can join the organization at any time. As an IT admin, it's your responsibility to create user accounts and assign required licenses for new employees. Although managing all these mailboxes, users, groups, and contacts in bulk would save you time, you can't perform bulk user management tasks like these in the Microsoft 365 admin center.

With limited management options in the admin center, you'd have to individually create the required number of user accounts, and then manually assign licenses to them.



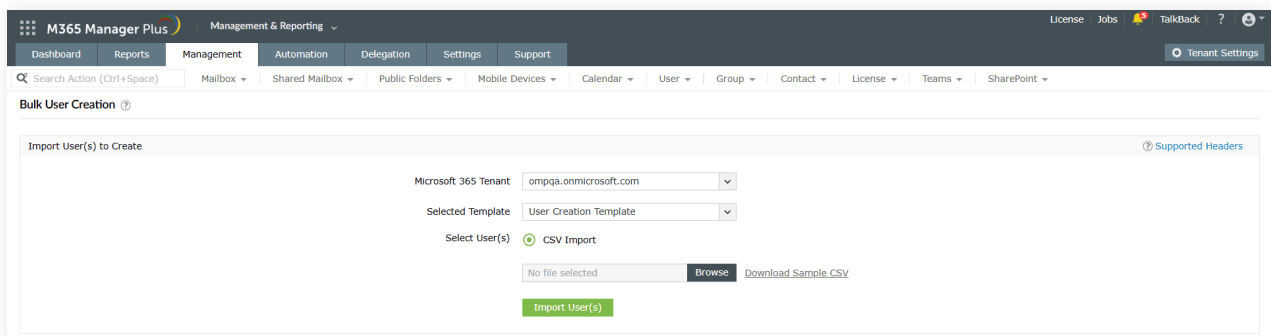
PowerShell scripts can handle bulk management tasks, but scripting only further complicates these tasks with painfully long scripts. Below is the script to create one hundred user accounts. The drawback of this script is entering the details for one hundred users manually; plus, you would have to write separate code to assign licenses for each new employee.

```

C:\> Connect-MsolService
for($i = 0 ; $i -lt 100; $i++)
{
    $FirstName = Read-Host "FirstName"
    $LastName = Read-Host "LastName"
    $UserPrincipalName = Read-Host "UserPrincipalName"
    $DisplayName = Read-Host "DisplayName"
    $UsageLocation = Read-Host "UsageLocation"
    $Office = Read-Host "Office"
    $PhoneNumber = Read-Host "PhoneNumber"
    $Title = Read-Host "Title"
    $State = Read-Host "State"
    $MobilePhone = Read-Host "MobilePhone"
    $StreetAddress = Read-Host "StreetAddress"
    $City = Read-Host "City"
    $Country = Read-Host "Country"
    $Department = Read-Host "Department"
    $Fax = Read-Host "Fax"
    $AlternateMobilePhones = Read-Host "AlternateMobilePhones"
    $AlternateEmailAddresses = Read-Host "AlternateEmailAddresses"
    $PostalCode = Read-Host "PostalCode"
    $Password = Read-Host "Password" -AsSecureString
    $PreferredLanguage = Read-Host "PreferredLanguage"
    New-MsolUser
    -FirstName $FirstName
    -LastName $LastName
    -UserPrincipalName $UserPrincipalName
    -DisplayName $DisplayName
    -UsageLocation $UsageLocation
    -Office $Office
    -PhoneNumber $PhoneNumber
    -Title $Title
    -State $State
    -MobilePhone $MobilePhone
    -StreetAddress $StreetAddress
    -City $City
    -Country $Country
    -Department $Department
    -Fax $Fax
    -AlternateMobilePhone $AlternateMobilePhones
    -AlternateEmailAddresses $AlternateEmailAddresses
    -PostalCode $PostalCode
    -Password $Password
    -PreferredLanguage $PreferredLanguage
}

```

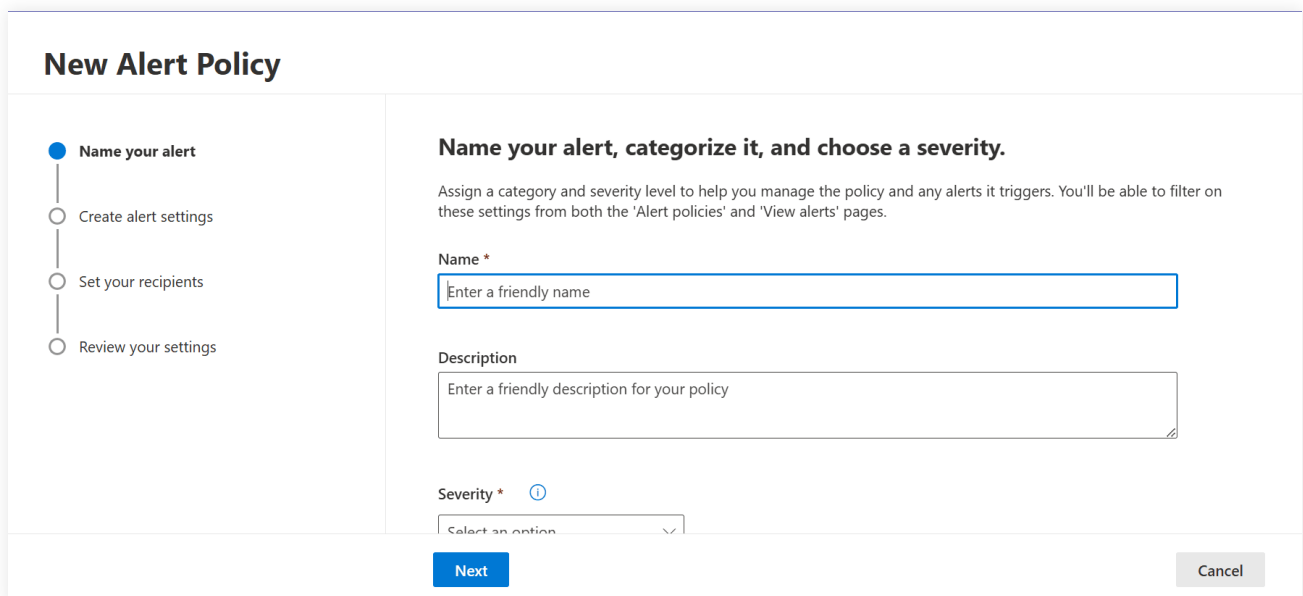

M365 Manager Plus overcomes all these challenges with easy-to-use management features. With M365 Manager Plus, you can create multiple user accounts and assign licenses to them in a single click. All you have to do is to upload a CSV file with the user information.

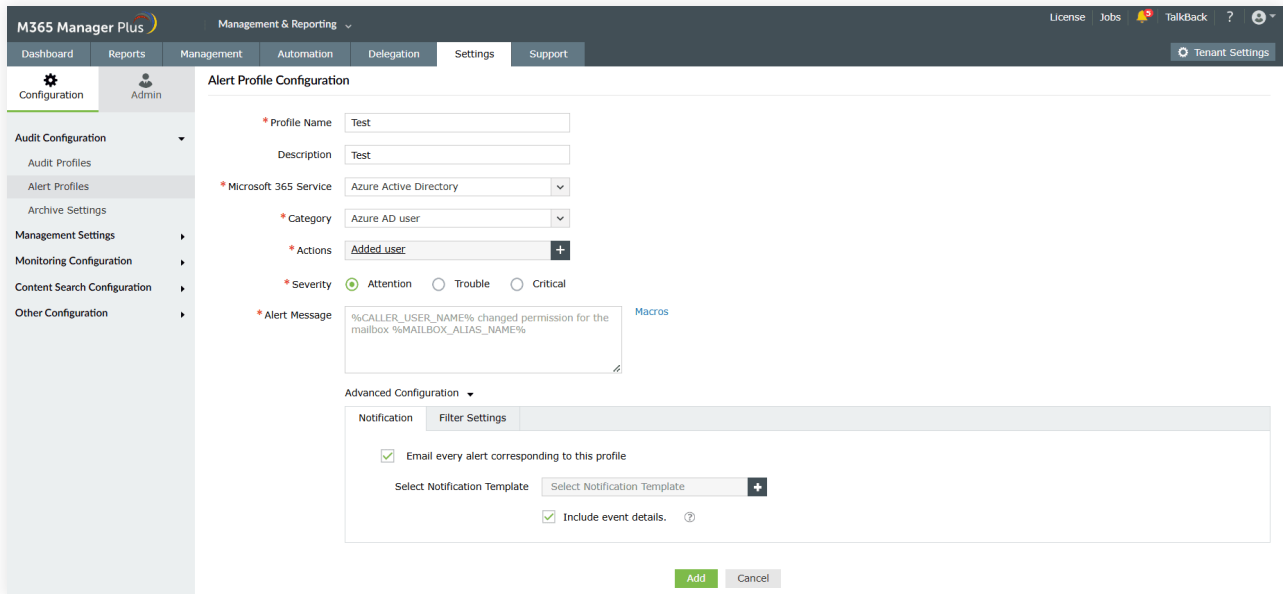


You can also reuse the CSV file you used to create user accounts to perform other [user management functions](#), like resetting user passwords, removing licenses, and locking accounts.

Microsoft 365 alerting

Alerts on critical events help you quickly take action when an issue arises. Although the Microsoft 365 admin center allows you to create alerts, it can't match M365 Manager Plus' impeccable customization features. The image below shows the features available to customize alerts in the Microsoft 365 admin center.





Summary

It's no doubt that the Microsoft 365 admin center and PowerShell are powerful. But there is also no doubt that each are complex in their own way, and neither can fulfil all your management needs. On the other hand, M365 Manager Plus performs all the tasks that can be performed using the admin center or PowerShell and many more.

To use M365 Manager Plus, you don't need much technical expertise. Even with just basic technical knowledge, you can perform all your management tasks in just a few clicks. You can also create custom roles and delegate tasks to technicians to reduce your and other administrators' workload. It's up to you to choose the right tool for seamless Microsoft 365 administration.

ManageEngine
M365 Manager Plus

Our Products

AD360 | Log360 | ADManager Plus | ADAudit Plus | ADSelfService Plus

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About M365 Manager Plus

ManageEngine M365 Manager Plus is a web-based, one-stop solution for Microsoft 365 reporting, auditing, management and monitoring that helps simplify Microsoft 365 governance, administration and security. M365 Manager Plus enables admins to gain visibility into various Microsoft 365 components and display key insights through more than 700 out-of-the-box reports. It eliminates the need for writing complex PowerShell scripts and reduces costs associated with administering Microsoft 365.

For more information about M365 Manager Plus, visit
www.manageengine.com/microsoft-365-management-reporting/.

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